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ABSTRACT

Project OUTCRIE represents an attempt by the College of Education at Ohio University, the Meigs Local School District, and the Meigs community to reverse the poor reading achievement and lack of academic stimulation of children in Appalachian schools. Teacher education is the nucleus of Project OUTCRIE's thrust. The project has three major components: (a) 20 interns, who are recent graduates of teacher education programs, receive professional training in a competency-based, field-based teacher education program leading to a Master of Education degree with a specialization in reading; (b) graduate courses are offered in the cooperative public schools, and tuition costs for these courses are waived for every teacher in the Meigs Local School District in an effort to upgrade the knowledge and expertise of these professionals to teach reading; and (c) the reading program and curriculum in the Meigs Local School District are being revised so that they can become more conducive to the needs and interests of Appalachian students and specifically to the children of the Meigs Local School District. (Author/JA)

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November 19, 1974

Dr. Walter J. Mars, Associate Director
AACTE
One DuPont Circle
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Dr. Mars:

The College of Education, Ohio University, is pleased to submit a description of Project OUTCRIE to be considered for the AACTE Distinguished Achievement Award in Teacher Education. Reading, as one of the nation's highest priorities in education, certainly deserves attention in the Appalachian Region of Southeastern Ohio. Project OUTCRIE may indeed be one of the most effective strategies for solving the problems related to reading in this region. It brings together a concerted effort of the school, community and university to focus upon Appalachian children and their needs in learning to read. Preliminary testing results of reading achievement demonstrate outstanding growth over a relatively short period of time by youngsters effected by Project OUTCRIE.

I know that the Committee will carefully review the project description for consideration as an outstanding teacher education program. It is our hope that it will also be recognized by your organization for its contribution to teacher education and reading in Appalachia.

Sincerely,

Samuel Goldman
Dean

SG:bb

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SUMMARY

For decades, reading deficiencies have hindered children in Appalachian schools. These schools contain a multitude of non-readers and poor readers. To further compound the problem, Appalachian communities are poor economically and cannot afford the effective, but expensive, educational services needed to overcome reading deficiencies. Since many of these students' parents and members of their community are also non-readers and/or deficient readers, little academic stimulation can be provided by the home and the non-school environments.

Project OUTCRIE represents an attempt by the College of Education at Ohio University, the Meigs Local School District, and the Meigs community to reverse the aforementioned conditions. Through utilization of a collaborative decision-making process and with the assistance of Teacher Corps funding, these three groups have joined forces in a partnership effort in order to combat the reading problems of children and adolescents in the Meigs Local School District.

Teacher education is the nucleus of Project OUTCRIE's thrust. The project has three major components: (1) Twenty interns, who are recent graduates of teacher education programs, receive professional training in a competency-based, field-based teacher education program leading to a Master of Education degree with specialization in Reading; (2) Graduate courses are offered in the cooperating public schools, and tuition costs for these courses are waived for every teacher in the Meigs Local School District in an effort to upgrade the knowledge and expertise of these professionals to teach reading; and, (3) The reading program and curriculum in the Meigs Local School District are being revised so that they can become more conducive to the needs and interests of Appalachian students and specifically to the children of the Meigs Local School District.

Thus far, Project OUTCRIE has made a significant, positive impact upon the Meigs Local School District. It has clearly demonstrated that a substantial amount of progress can be made when a College of Education, a public school system, and a community work cooperatively and collectively together toward one common goal - the quality education of children and adolescents.

A. DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM

Anyone involved in the field of education today is aware of the staggering national statistics pertaining to reading achievement in our public schools. If these figures serve as a depressing account of the success of reading instruction in our schools nationally, the following statistics will help to dramatize the overwhelming need for improved reading instruction in the rural Appalachian segments of our society. The figures that follow reflect the status of reading instruction in one of these Appalachian communities, the Meigs Local School District, and help to illustrate the severity of the problem in rural areas throughout Appalachia. Our survey revealed: 52% of the primary students, 54% of the intermediate, and 65% of the secondary students in this district scored below their mean expectancy level in reading; only 21% of the elementary teachers and 24% of the secondary teachers possessed a Master's degree and the overwhelming majority of teachers had not taken courses in reading instruction for a number of years; and due to economic deprivation (as evidenced by a 9.2% unemployment rate in Meigs County), a scarcity of instructional and enrichment materials exist in the Meigs Local School District.

An awareness of the critical reading problems experienced by their students and a desire to bring about a long awaited change in reading instruction lead the local district personnel and its community to enter into a partnership with the Ohio University College of Education and the Teacher Corps division of HEW in Washington. The resulting project, Project OUTCRIE, is a concerted effort to bring about a positive change in the quality of reading instruction in the Meigs Local Schools and to enrich the instructional expertise of the district staff and interns in the field of reading.

From its inception, through its implementation, the program has functioned on the premise that all project objectives be based on a collaborative

decision making process involving representatives of all the participating agencies. This system of checks and balances has provided for relevance and continuity of purpose of all project components.

The program itself consists of three major thrusts, field-based teacher education for 20 Ohio University Master's level interns, in-service education for the district staff and personnel, and program and curriculum change at the public school level.

Twenty Master level students are working on a five day a week basis in classrooms in the Meigs Local School District. At the same time, the interns are participating in a competency-based teacher education program in reading provided by the Ohio University College of Education. These courses are taught by university faculty on-site in the Meigs Local School District. At the end of two years, the interns will graduate with a Master of Education degree and validation as reading specialists in the state of Ohio. The combination of University competency-based courses and field-based experiences in the district classrooms, give the interns the opportunity to transfer the theory and skills they are developing in their course work, into practice under the supervision of four team leaders, the project director, and the project assistant director. In addition to the resources mentioned above, Ohio University College of Education faculty members, teaching the courses on-site, are giving of their time to provide the interns with direct support in their classroom situations.

In-service education for the district staff is based on an ongoing, district based, model for in-service education and aimed specifically at the needs and expressed concerns of the school district personnel as identified by a needs assessment conducted at the beginning of the project. District teachers have been given the opportunity to enroll in the same Master's level courses that are being offered to the project interns, and at the end of two years, will have participated in a total of 35 quarter hours of

Master's level instruction in the teaching of reading. In addition to the University courses, a series of in-service programs dealing with specific reading problems are being offered in a workshop setting to members of the district staff. The resources of the project team leaders, director, assistant director and University reading instructors are also available and are being used by the teachers in the Meigs Local School District on a daily basis in the district classrooms.

Program and curriculum change in the district represents the third major thrust of Project OUTCRIE. There are several factors acting to bring about a positive change in the district reading program. The placement of interns in the schools and the active involvement of the district teachers in the in-service and course offerings has brought to the district a heightened awareness of the reading process and what is needed to help children develop the skills inherent in that process. This awareness has also created a receptivity on the part of the district staff to look at and discuss curriculum revision through the use of a curriculum coordinating council consisting of project staff, teachers, administrators, community members and university personnel. This committee is working to develop a reading program geared to the needs and interests of the Appalachian students and specifically to the children of the Meigs Local School District.

B. OBJECTIVES

Because the project staff views the teacher education process as a combination of efforts among the Local school district, the University and the local community involved, the establishment of measurable objectives for each of these three agencies was considered necessary. The following is a listing of those objectives grouped according to their respective agencies:

Public School

1. A reading curriculum will be developed and implemented which will provide for continuous instruction in reading skills from kindergarten to grade twelve for all pupils.

2. Reading skills within the curriculum will be integrated with writing, speaking and listening.
3. All subject matter teachers will be expected to demonstrate competency in teaching students how to read and study in their content field.
4. A program of cooperative instructional planning by all teachers will be implemented in order that reading skills will not be overlooked or overstressed.
5. Differentiated reading materials and assignments will be employed in all subjects and at every grade level for deficient, capable, and skilled readers.
6. Guidance in free reading will be provided to all students in the Meigs Local School District.
7. Corrective and/or remedial instruction will be provided for seriously deficient readers.
8. The growth in reading and related language arts skills of Meigs students will be measured through the utilization of standardized and informal tests.
9. An evaluation of the amount and quality of voluntary reading (done in Meigs County) will be conducted.
10. The effect of reading achievement in all school subjects will be assessed.

University

1. To develop and pilot an innovative teacher education program in the field of Reading.
2. To contribute performance criteria for teacher certification in conjunction with the state of Ohio.
3. To disseminate desirable and validated program elements to all institutions involved with training teachers for the Appalachian region.

Community

1. To seek more community (especially parent) involvement in the programs of the Meigs Local School District, that is, curriculum planning, instruction, conferences, volunteer programs, and public relations.
2. To promote an increased community awareness in the local district with particular emphasis upon the role of parents in the reading process.
3. To promote a continual examination of the learning process with particular emphasis on the following: (a) how individuals learn; and, (b) parent-student relationships.
4. To promote the formation of a district-wide advisory committee open to ANYONE who can display a genuine, positive interest in the instructional programs of the district.

C. PERSONNEL INVOLVED

This project has a full-time staff of thirty professionals. The staff is comprised of Ohio University College of Education faculty members, Meigs Local School District personnel, and members of the Meigs community. In addition, one hundred and nine teachers in the Meigs Local School District have entered into a partnership with the project staff predicated upon the process of collaborative decision making.

Although these individuals possess widely varying backgrounds and degrees of professional training, they have one common goal -- their commitment to the improvement of reading instruction for children and adolescents in the Meigs Local School District. As a result of this commitment, these professionals have invested their time and energy by actively participating in this teacher education program so that they can attain their potential as quality teachers of reading.

D. BUDGET

The budget for Project OUTCRIE reflects a true partnership arrangement between a public school system, a university, and the state and federal government. Although the project has been enhanced by the tie into Teacher Corps, there is an equal financial contribution to the ongoing program from all parties involved. The university waives tuition for all teachers enrolled in the in-service courses in reading, the public school system contributes space, personnel and materials as well as financial support. The major portion of Teacher Corps funds are designated for intern stipends. Long range plans for the project include an eventual adoption of non-paid internships as an integral part of the College of Education field-based teacher education program which would substantially reduce the cost of the program and the need for federal support.

E. CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

The results of planning and implementing a program which has focused upon the needs of Appalachian children in the area of reading development have included the following contributions to the field of teacher education:

1. A competency-based, field-based program in reading for Appalachian children.
2. Training component which emphasizes the multicultural make-up of a typical Appalachian school community and the relationship of the culture to the philosophical foundations of education.
3. A program which combines pre-service and in-service training in the critical areas of reading and diagnostic/prescriptive teaching.
4. A partnership model which demonstrates cooperative decision-making at all levels of a teacher education program including the federal, state, public school, university and community.
5. A grass-roots example of involvement in teacher education which calls for commitment from the entire school system and community and has evolved from an expressed community need.

F. EVALUATION

The objectives of this project are behavioral in nature. As such, they are explicit and measurable, and as a result, are subject to an on-going discrepancy analysis procedure. At present, evaluation of the project's objectives has revealed past changes at the University, the school district, and the community levels, as they relate to the teacher education. At the University level, competencies conducive to the training of high quality teachers of reading have been identified and organized into a systematic competency-based teacher education program (CBTE); experiences pertinent to the teacher education procedures are being provided by departments outside the College of Education, thereby providing a broader frame of reference for teachers through their exposure to inter-disciplinary academic areas; and the symbionic relationship of the College of Education and the public schools has become a functioning and total part of the teacher education procedure at this institution.

Since the inception of Project OUTCRIE several significant positive changes in attitude and methods related to teacher education have been experienced by the staff of the Meigs School District. Traditional teacher apathy has been displaced by a new and vigorous sense of professionalism. This is evidenced by a large majority of Meigs Local School District teachers participating in the on-sight, CBTE course offerings dealing with the improvement of reading instruction; the implementation and operation of a diagnostic, prescriptive teaching style in classrooms at both the elementary and secondary school levels; the establishment of a total school secondary school reading program in the district - including remedial, developmental, and content area services; and the importance of pupil performance in the area of reading.

Through the efforts of Project OUTCRIE, community involvement in the Meigs Local School District is at the all-time high. Members of the Meigs

community were actively involved in the development of the "Community Analysis" module of our program and in the "Community Awareness" teacher education component of our program; and members of the community are serving on the project's Teacher Education Advisory Committee. As a result of community-input into the project, the lines of communication between school district personnel and community residents are causing teachers to be more fully cognizant of the feelings, attitudes and educational expectations of members of their school district and the needs, interests and special backgrounds of the children and adolescents under their direct and indirect instructional supervision.